DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 425 CG 005 425

AUTHOR Johnson, Richard W.; Leonard, Louise C.
TITLE Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Student Nurses.
INSTITUTION American Coll. Personnel Association.; Wisconsin Univ., Madison.
PUB DATE Mar 70
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association in St. Louis, Missouri, March 16-18, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.70
DESCRIPTORS *Group Counseling, Group Dynamics, *Group Experience, *Interaction, Interaction Process Analysis, *Nurses, Nursing, Self Concept, *Sensitivity Training, T Groups

ABSTRACT

In an effort to determine the effectiveness of group counseling with student nurses, 76 students enrolled in their first professional nursing course were randomly placed either in a counseling group or in a control group. As hypothesized, those students participating in the group counseling sessions received significantly higher grades in the practice part of the course than those who did not participate. No significant differences were found between the groups for theory grades or final grades. Each student had completed the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, but the results indicated that the influence of group assignment on the practice grades did not vary with the students personality characteristics. One finding suggested that the counseling sessions may have been most beneficial for students who scored low in self-suffiency on the questionnaire. Some limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are discussed. (Author/TL)

1970 ACPA Paper

ED040425

Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Student Nurses[1]

Richard W. Johnson and Louise C. Leonard
University of Wisconsin Counseling Center

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of group counseling with student nurses enrolled in their first professional nursing course. Although this topic has been explored in a number of papers (Cleland & Carnes, 1965; Currey, Swisher, & Kruse, 1968; Deck, Hurley, & Crumpton, 1963; Garner & Lowe, 1965; Rosenberg & Fuller, 1955, 1957; Thompson, Lakin, & Johnson, 1965; and Wolk, 1967), these studies have either lacked an adequate control group, an external criterion, or a measure of the influence of personality variables on the results. This study attempts to correct for these limitations by randomly assigning students to experimental and control conditions, by employing clinical and academic grades as criteria which are external to the group process itself, and by studying the interaction of personality inventory scores with treatment conditions.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CG 005 425

Method

Subjects. The 77 students enrolled in Nursing 114 (Core Concepts in Nursing) at the University of Wisconsin during the Summer Session, 1968, served as subjects. Nursing 114, the first required course in the professional nursing curriculum, is offered at the beginning of the student's third year of study at the University. The course combines both theoretical and practical aspects of nursing. The eight credit course is the only course which the students take during the eight week summer session. Forty-one of the 77 students were transfer students from other colleges. All of the students were females.

Each student completed the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) during the first week of class.

Experimental Conditions. The 77 students were randomly assigned to 11 groups of 7 members each. Six of these groups were randomly assigned to participate in group counseling sessions. The remaining five groups were used as control groups. Students in these groups met with their nursing instructor for one additional hour each week instead of attending the counseling groups. One of the students assigned to a counseling group withdrew from the nursing course prior to the first meeting. Of the students that completed the course, 41 were assigned to the counseling groups and 35 were placed in the control groups. Both the counseling groups and the control groups met once a week for a total of seven sessions.

The group counseling sessions were designed primarily to help students be more sensitive, or more aware, of feelings and attitudes. The groups may be broadly defined as "sensitivity groups" or "basic encounter groups" as described by Rogers (1967). The sessions focused on the students' reactions to their clinical experiences. Presumably, greater awareness of self and others should aid the student in adjusting to the hospital setting and in attending to the psychological needs of the patients.

Two counseling interns at the Counseling Center, both doctoral students enrolled in the Department of Counseling and Guidance, conducted the counseling groups. Each counselor led three groups. The counselors met weekly with a senior staff psychologist at the Counseling Center to listen to tapes of the group sessions and to discuss the effectiveness of their procedures.

Criteria. Grades in both the practical and theoretical parts of the course and the final grade (the average of the practice and theory grades) were used as criteria.

Statistical analyses. The mean differences between the groups on the criterion variables were evaluated for statistical significance by one-way analyses of variance.

The interaction of personality characteristics with counseling procedures in affecting practice grades was separately determined for each of the traits measured by the 16 PF.

Scores for the Ss on each of the 16 variables were divided at the median into high and low groups. Sixteen two-way analyses of variance were run. Scheffe's approximation method was used to correct for unequal cell sizes. Differences in the proportion of transfer students and differences between the mean cumulative grade point averages (GPA) for the two groups were analyzed for statistical significance to insure that the two groups were equivalent in terms of previous academic experiences and achievements.

Hypothesis. It was hypothesized that the students assigned to the counseling groups would perform better in the practice part of the course than students placed in the control groups. No a priori hypotheses were stated regarding the possible interaction of the personality variables with practice grades.

Results

The proportions of experimental (25 of 41) and control subjects (16 of 35) who had transferred to the School of Nursing from another campus were not significantly different from chance variation ($\chi^2 = 1.79$; $p > .05$). The two groups possessed comparable cumulative GPA's for the first two years. The experimental subjects had a mean cumulative GPA of 2.74 (B-) with a standard deviation of .42 compared with a mean of 2.61 (B-) and a standard deviation of .49 for the control subjects ($F = 1.80$; $p > .05$).

As shown in Table 1, the hypothesis that the students participating in the counseling sessions would obtain higher

practice grades was supported ($F = 4.76$; $p < .05$). The average practice grade for the students in the counseling groups was 3.32 (B+); the average practice grade for the control students was 3.07 (B).

Insert Table 1 About Here

None of the interactions between the 16 PF variables and group assignment was significant ($p < .05$) in influencing practice grades. In general, the counseling procedures were not more effective for one type of student than another.

The interaction between Factor Q_2, Self-sufficiency, and group assignment was marginally significant ($F = 3.38$; $p = .07$). If the students scored low in self-sufficiency, the sensitivity groups appeared to be relatively effective; however, if the students scored high on this trait, participation in group counseling appeared to make little difference.

Discussion

Assuming that the groups were equal in all other respects, group counseling apparently aided the students in the performance of their hospital field work assignments. They may have been able to adapt to a wide variety of situations by openly confronting their attitudes toward these situations in the counseling sessions. It may have been possible to work through negative feelings or feelings of anxiety in relatively early stages of development.

A subjective analysis of the tapes of the group counseling sessions suggests that the students were most concerned with their academic coursework and their hospital experiences. They discussed attitudes and feelings regarding patients, their relationships with other hospital personnel, their duties and responsibilities as nurses, hospital routine, phenomena such as pain and death, the nursing curriculum, and academic pressures. The group leaders sought to help the students gain insight and understanding regarding such feelings and attitudes.

Because a different nursing instructor assigned grades for each of the 11 groups (6 counseling groups and 5 control groups), it is possible that the instructors responsible for grading the students in the counseling groups may have graded by a more lenient set of standards. Although the groups were randomly assigned to instructors as a safeguard against this possibility, it would be better to have all the students evaluated by the same instructors.

Knowledge of the students' assignment to the counseling sessions may also have biased the grades. The nursing instructors may have given the students participating in the counseling groups higher practice grades because they expected them to perform better. Ideally, the instructors assigning the grades should not know which of the students were placed in the counseling groups and which were not.

Despite the apparent success of the group counseling procedures, a number of individuals within the groups resisted any

discussion of personal feelings. For some, the group leader was looked upon as an outsider forced upon the group members. Perhaps a clearer presentation of the purpose of the counseling groups and/or more extended meetings would have helped increase the involvement of the students in the groups.

Although the data are only suggestive, the results indicate that the group sessions may have been most helpful for those students who scored low in self-sufficiency on the 16 PF. Cattell and Eber (1962) describe the person who scores low on this trait as "group-dependent", "a joiner," and "lacking in individual resolution," while the high-scorer is described as "self-sufficient, prefers own decisions, resourceful." In retrospect, it makes good psychological sense that the students who would profit most from the counseling groups would be those who prefer group activities and who need group support while the students who would benefit least from the group would be those accustomed to taking action on their own. If this finding could be confirmed and extended, counselors would be greatly helped in deciding which clients they should refer to group counseling.

Several other studies suggest that group techniques may vary in effectiveness with personality characteristics of the group members. Cleland and Carnes (1965) found that nurses who confided more freely with others profited more from a personal counseling group than individuals who were less willing to confide in others. Thelen and Harris (1968) found

that counseling groups for college underachievers were most effective with psychologically "healthy" or adaptive participants. In a somewhat related study, Molde and Weins (1968) found that the pattern of group interaction varied for "task oriented" (surgical) nurses and "person-oriented" (psychiatric) nurses. Such studies, coupled with the present one, suggest that the differential effectivenss of group counseling with different personality types is a subject well worth further investigation. For the most part, studies of this nature have been neglected (Campbell & Dunnette, 1968).

Summary and Conclusions

Of 76 students who completed an intensive, eight week introductory nursing course, 41 were randomly assigned to counseling groups and 35 were placed in control groups. Those students who participated in the group counseling sessions received significantly higher grades in the practice part of the course than those students who did not participate. No significant differences were found between the two groups for theory grades or for final grades.

In general, the influence of the group assignment on the practice grades did not vary with the personality characteristics of the students. One finding of borderline significance suggested that the counseling sessions may have been most beneficial for students who scored low in self-sufficiency on the 16 PF.

Some limitations of the study and suggestions for further research were discussed.

References

Campbell, J. P., & Dunnette, M. D. Effectiveness of T-group experience in managerial training and development. Psychological Bulletin, 1968, 70, 73-104.

Cattell, R. B., & Eber, H. W. Manual for Forms A and B of the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire. Champaign, Illinois: Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, 1962.

Cleland, R. S., & Carnes, G. D. Emotional vs ideational emphasis during group counseling with student nurses. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1965, 12, 282-286

Curry, J. W., Swisher, J. D., & Kruse, L. C. Improving human relations skills through programmed instruction, Nursing Research, 1968, 17, 455-459.

Deck, E. S., Hurley, J. B., & Crumpton, E. Effects of group psycho therapy on attitudes of nursing students. Group Psychotherapy, 1963, 16, 46-54.

Garner, G.S., & Lower, A. Group dynamics in graduate education of nurses. Nursing Research, 1965, 14, 146-150.

Molde, D. A., & Wiens, A. N. Interview interaction behavior of nurses with task versus person orientation. Nursing Research, 1968, 17, 45-51.

Rogers, C. R. The process of the basic encounter groups. In J.F.T. Bugental (Ed.), Challenges of humanistic psychology. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, Pp 261-276.

Rosenberg, P. P., & Fuller, M. L. Human relations seminar: A group work experiment in nursing education. Mental Hygiene, 1955, 39, 406-432.

Rosenberg, R. R., & Fuller, M. L. Dynamic analysis of the student nurse. Group Psychotherapy, 1957, 10, 22-37.

Thelen, M. H., & Harris, C. S. Personality of college under-achievers who improve with group psychotherapy. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1968, 46, 561-566.

Thompson, V. D., Lakin, M., & Johnson, B. S. Sensitivity training and nursing education: A process study, Nursing Research, 1965, 14, 132-137.

Wolk, D. J. Sensitization seminars for students. Perspectives in Psychiatric Care, 1967, 5, 136-141.

Footnote

[1]A modified version of this paper was presented at the Annual Convention of the American College Personnel Association in St. Louis, Missouri, in March, 1970. The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of Janet S. Boyd, Assistant Professor of Nursing, Janice R. Anderzon, Instructor of Nursing, and Randolph S. Thrush, Director, University of Wisconsin Counseling Center. Wayne S. Applebaum and Lawrence A. Wolfe counseling interns at the Counseling Center, conducted the group counseling sessions. Nolan E. Penn helped plan and initiate the study. This study was supported in part by a grant from University of Wisconsin Graduate School Research Committee.

Table 1

Grades in Nursing 114 for Students

in Counseled and Control Groups

Variable	Counseled Group (N = 41)		Control Group (N = 35)		F
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Theory grade	2.17	.50	2.13	.60	.10
Practice grade	3.32	.50	3.07	.50	4.76*
Final grade	2.78	.61	2.59	.74	1.51

*$p < .05$